



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 1865.

No. 8.

ANGELA; AN HISTORICAL TALE.

CHAPTER V.—THE PROCESSION.

"Rose of the Cross! thou Mystic Flower! I lift my soul to Thee! In every melancholy hour, Mary, remember me!"—Anon.

October had set in; the Neapolitan fleet we saw last making its way into the port of Syra remained some hours at anchor there, and then put to sea again, after taking in a provision of water; but, according to the commands of the Bishop, issued, as we have seen, to the Grand Vicar, none of the Catholic inhabitants ventured near the beach, and those who casually encountered them showed, by their words and actions, that they feared their presence. The opportunity, however, was not lost. Francesco Commenos, at the head of some of the schismatic Greeks, sent off secretly the most calumnious letters to Constantinople, representing these galleys to have been invited thither by Monsignore Carga, and furnished with victuals and money by the inhabitants. They moreover stated that there was a plan on foot to seize the island, and deliver it over into the hands of the Viceroy of Naples and the Pope, who were represented as leagued together with the Knights of Malta against the Republic of Venice, then at peace with the Sultan. As one of the proofs, poor Angela's nightly expedition to show the fountain to the Knight of St. John was brought forward, and a tale built on this of the secret intelligence carried on by Monsignore Carga, by means of his adopted daughter, with the Maltese galley, and so on with the Neapolitan fleet. As Francesco was possessed of some influence at Constantinople, these calumnies were the more easily credited; and thus he hoped to satisfy his bitter sectarian hatred, as well as the grudge he had long felt against the Bishop for having rejected sundry offers made by him for the hand of Angela, through different channels, when he found that a lofty disdain was all he could procure from Angela herself. And who was this Francesco Commenos? He boasted to be descended from the old Emperors of Constantinople; but, impoverished and exiled, his parents had taken refuge in the island, where, however, they soon contrived to amass a considerable quantity of wealth, and had bequeathed it all to their only son, with another heritage of a double-distilled portion of Greek deceit and pride, and fanaticism, brought from that stronghold of the Eastern schism, Constantinople. Rumors of these machinations had, however, got abroad; and the terrified inhabitants, kept in awe by the few Turks on the island, who assumed a most menacing aspect, trembled at the sight of every sail. Another circumstance, too, served to increase the trouble. No rain had fallen for six months, and the water was decreasing daily, till the little thread that now only fell from the fountain behind the town scarce sufficed for its wants. Many of the inhabitants scattered themselves over the surrounding country, bringing the precious element in jars a distance of three or four miles; the women, who were accustomed to go every morning to the fountain for the daily supply for the household, had to wait hour after hour in the sun for their turn to come round to fill their water-jars. The road began to be thronged even during the night, and the complaints and lamentations were beginning to be audibly heard.

"Why does not the Bishop order a procession?" said the women one to another as they wearily sat, hour after hour, playing their distaffs by the fountain. This was, and is still, the usual place where all the gossip was told, the scandal perpetrated, and very often the flirtations carried on by glances and a sly word by the least modest portion of the young girls. To say the truth, however, to this day public opinion would suffer nothing more, so strict are the ideas of decorum on this point still in that part of the East; and to their honor be it told, very few of the maidens of Syra at that time, and only a few years back, would have done even this. Those that did so were marked, like Annetta, and shunned except by their like.

"I think he might as well," said a middle-aged woman of rather loquacious habits, who had just filled her jar, and stood with her coarse cloth hung over her shoulder, ready to depart: "we have had processions for less evils than what we endure now. Do you remember the one that went out to the Chapel of our Immaculate Lady for the locusts? and then the one to Our Lady of Grace, before this Bishop (God bless him) came amongst us?"

"They say there is to be one on the 15th," remarked another, whose aged face wore an expression of care and sorrow. "Where did you hear that, Kyva Giovannetta?" chorussed the whole assembly. "I think my sister, Sister Francesca, told it to my daughter, Annetta, last night," replied Giovannetta, whose surname was Chiamese.

"Ah, Sister Francesca is sure to know," said an old man of the name of Tommaso Cicala, who on account of his lameness and other distortions was intrusted with the office of guardian of the fountain, and remained there from sunrise to nightfall, to keep order and prevent any quarrels. "There, make haste with you, Irene Bussio; for Sister Battista is coming down the hill, and the nuns are not obliged to wait for their turn, you know."

"I don't see why they should not," said the girl; "we seculars have more to do than they have, I am sure. Our children have been screaming for their breakfasts, while we have been waiting here these 'wo hours."

"Why, surely, you would not have them sit here and listen to all your chattering, Irene?" said the first speaker, who was her mother. "Here, come and steady my jar while I place it on my shoulder, and then you may take up your own, and not talk nonsense."

"Stop till I seal it, Nainai," said Irene, a little confused, as she wrung out the rag that was to form the primitive stopper of her water-jar; and having really hermetically 'sealed' it in this way, placed it on a projecting rock, and helped her mother to load hers on her shoulder.

Meantime several Sisters, at the head of whom was Sister Battista, all in their coarse brown habits and white cords, approached.

The women greeted them kindly, and some stood up for them to pass.

One by one the nuns placed their water-jars under the fountain, while the rest stood together a little apart, and were subjected to many questions as to the intended procession.

"It is to leave early in the morning," said Sister Battista; "and to go as far as Our Lady of Grace, the chapel on the promontory eight miles off, at the other side of the island. Let us hope God and Our Lady will hear our prayers, and avert every evil that is impending."

"Sister Battista," cried the merry Irene, "was it you that heard the beautiful music issuing from Monsignore's windows some nights ago?"

"It was not only I, Irene, that heard it," said Sister Battista gravely; "all who were watching at St. George's that night can witness to it."

"Then you did hear it," persisted Irene; "do tell me, was it very beautiful?"

"It certainly was not like earthly music," said Sister Battista; "but let us not waste our time in talking of this. We know not what a day may bring forth now, and we had all much better be commending ourselves to God, and praying heartily to be defended from every danger, than talking so much."

"Quite true," replied Irene's mother; "so, Irene, hold your tongue, and for your penance we will follow these good nuns, and say the Rosary with them as they return."

But we will leave them to pursue their way back into town. The group that wound up that steep pathway was picturesque enough—one hand supporting the heavy jar, and the other holding a Rosary, as with one accord they went through that Catholic devotion ere they reached the gate which Angela had so hurriedly entered on that memorable night our readers have already heard about.

Brightly and cloudlessly rose the sun on the 16th of October, 1617. The vineyards were looking hot and dusty, like patches of dark green on the arid sides of the hills. Everything had a parched and dried-up appearance. The very ground had opened in cracks from the long-continued drought and heat, and all the cattle were dying off for want of pasture. Even the fig-trees seemed to share the general desolation;—for they had yielded their luscious load of fruit, and had been stripped of their leaves to give a scanty meal to the hungry flocks, and no longer afforded even their stunted shade to the passer-by. Truly it was a glorious sight the multitude that thronged out with the rising sun from the cathedral church of St. George on that bright Eastern morning. First appeared the banners of the Confraternities, followed by the brethren on foot, two and two, in their several costumes, all with one voice reciting the Rosary, as, with bent heads and bare feet, they paced along in penitential guise. After them came all the clergy of the island, their white surplices gleaming in the sunshine, and the silver cross, glittering as if it were studded with diamonds, in front.—Among them was to be seen the brown habits of the Capuchin Friars, and lastly the venerable form of the saintly Carga. By his side another episcopal form was seen. It was that of Monsignore de Rigo, the Bishop of Tinos, who had arrived a few days before on a visit to his friend. Behind thronged every man of that town who could be summoned, and then again, in regular order, the women, young girls, and children, headed by the whole band of Dominican and Franciscan Tertiaries, the white dress of the one Order contrasting strongly with the dark-brown habit of the other, which followed in their train.

The clergy chanted in solemn tones the Litanies of the Saints; and from time to time, in that long train of human beings, all walking on in perfect order, without jostling or hurry, one band after another began the Rosary. When the voice that led the chorus of Sisters' voices could no longer be heard in the distance, another was found to commence afresh, and so on, till the passer-by heard nothing but one continued rise and swell of human voices, all repeating with child-like fervor, 'Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis, peccatoribus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.' And tears might be seen falling from many eyes; and many even walked in more penitential guise, with bare feet, and hands bound, like condemned criminals, behind their backs, tracking the way very soon literally with their blood; for they felt that some sacrifice was required of them to avert the forebodings of some dreadful coming evil that was weighing on almost every heart, of which the drought was but the forerunner and emblem.—On and on it wound, that long procession, behind the town, skirting the heights on one side, with a deep gorge, wherein lay the deserted fountain, on the other, till lost behind a range of hills. And if that range of mountains, were crossed, the passer-by might see it making its way, with the same chanted strains and murmured prayers, and the same order and devotion, round and round the summits of new hills, along the rugged path, till slowly the expanse of the blue sea opened on the opposite side of the island, stretching away towards Andros, and, blue in the distance, the other Cyclades that bounded the horizon. Slowly it now descended to the sea-shore, where a picturesque promontory running into the sea bore on its summit a chapel, the shrine of Our Lady of Grace.

And here, while the wearied multitude, after three hours walk, stood or rested around, the venerable form of the Bishop might be seen as he mounted, with his attendant clergy, a projecting rock, and addressed them in words that might have fallen from an apostle's lips. All felt as though it was his last farewell; and the multitude drowned in tears, scarce heeded the rising of the wind and the clouding of the sky; and not till a few heavy drops fell among them did they begin to perceive their unprotected plight in the open fields. By the time Mass had been said, the rain began to descend in torrents, and leave was given to the multitude to disperse, and make the best of their way, wet but rejoicing, by the shortest cut, to their homes. Not so the clergy.—Through rain and wet, through the distant muttering of the thunder and the flash of the lightning, the howling of the wind and the distant raging of the sea, they chanted on the praises of God on their homeward path around their faithful Bishop, who, bare-headed, walked among them as though he felt it not. The Confraternities too, and many of the men, with the band of Sisters, followed, dripping, but cheerily, in their train; till, towards two in the afternoon, all were safe within doors. Angela was among the few who clung to the procession to the last; but as she passed along the mountain height, why was it that she lingered behind the rest, and distractions filled her mind? Why was she gazing out so earnestly at that distant sail? She had recognised the banner of St. John; and distinctly she saw the galley veer from its course, and forced back by the storm, make towards the island. A jutting promontory hid it from sight, but not before she had satisfied herself that it was the same galley that had anchored two months before in the harbor, and that now it had steered for the little port of Cini, on the opposite side of the island. Thoughts unbidden rushed across her mind; and, angry at herself, she attempted in vain to recover her recollection; so that, vexed at her want of fervor and devotion during the latter part of the way, she determined to atone for it by going to what was one of her favorite devotions. It was the custom in many of the Greek islands, and one restored immediately by Monsignore Carga, for the secular clergy to meet in the cathedral church to recite their Office in common; and Angela loved to hide herself in a corner, and follow their measured chant. Accordingly, having changed her clothes, she mounted the narrow lanes and steep flight of steps leading to the cathedral, and, placing herself close to a window in a recess formed by the belfry, where she was concealed from sight, but yet could have a full view of the choir and Bishop's throne, abandoned herself to her meditations. One by one the priests came to their places; the Bishop came in, and the solemn Office commenced.

The rain had ceased, but the wind continued to blow with violence, and, startled by a very violent gust, Angela casually lifted her eyes.—Once more a sail met her view, bearing down with great velocity towards the port. Something seemed almost to force her to gaze at it; every moment it grew more distinct, till at last she could doubt no longer. A ray of sunlight burst out, and lighted up the crescent on the

top of the mast, and Angela sprang to her feet. What should she do? disturb the Office? give the alarm to the inhabitants? for too surely it was a large Turkish ship bearing down upon the devoted island. The *Magnificat* was intoned at this moment; and Angela, turning round, met the Bishop's eyes fixed upon her. It was but for an instant; but she felt that his look meant 'be still.' And she was still,—all through the glorious canticle of thanksgiving uttered 1600 years before by the Mother of God,—all thro' the concluding prayers; and then, crossing the church with a firm step, as the Bishop turned in procession from the front door, she knelt before him, saying, calmly, "Father, the infidels are upon us!"

A smile crossed Monsignore Carga's features; while all around, consternation in their looks, rushed to the parapet or the window to ascertain the truth.

"My children," said he, "there is yet time for flight. They can hardly land before nightfall. Warn the people, and tell them to escape instantly, with their wives and children, to any place of security they can think of; and you, all of you, I charge you, on the obedience you owe me, to do the same."

"And you, Monsignore," said one of the priests "will you follow us? for yours will be the first life aimed at."

"The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep," replied the Bishop—

"Then we remain with you," returned that faithful band of clergy; "where the shepherd is, there must the flock remain."

"Nay, my children," replied the venerable martyr in will, ere long martyr in reality, "I charge you, fly! One victim is enough; live for the sake of these poor sheep; for the churchyard, and even the church, was rapidly filling with men, women, and children, flying for refuge, at the first notice of danger, to their Bishop's feet, and uttering wild cries of despair!"

Ah, surely it was a scene worthy of the first days of Christianity that churchyard presented, as, lifting his hands on high, he gave them his parting blessing, and, commending them to their pastors, himself expressed his determination to go forth at once and meet the enemy, and offer himself either as victim or peace-maker. In vain they wept and entreated; till at last, finding all supplication useless, and moreover that, more strongly than ever, he obliged both clergy and laity to retire instantly and take refuge in the mountains, one by one they descended the steps, stopping the crowd that was still hastening up; and even the priests, in tears, girded themselves to the flight their beloved Bishop would not share with them. In a few minutes all had departed; noise and confusion reigned in the streets; men, women, and children hurrying rapidly out of the town, and losing themselves among the hills, terror and amazement on their faces. Angela alone stood still before the church, by the Prelate's side.

CHAPTER VI.—THE LONE CHAPEL ON THE HILL-SIDE.

"Courage, duteous maiden; the pale and bleeding brows, The wan and dying lips, are the portion of the spouse."—Keble.

"Angela, my child," said the Bishop, after a few moments' pause, during which he contemplated the mingled flight on one side and the approaching galley on the other; "why linger here? I was not wont to speak in vain."

"Oh, my Father, my Father!" she exclaimed. "I could say, with St. Lawrence, whether guest thou without thy child?"

"Nay, Angela," he replied; "there are more dangers for thee than winning the crown of martyrdom among these infidels. Hasten, my child, to Sister Francesca; thou wilt be especially sought for; for Francesco owes thee a grudge. Tell her I charge her to fly,—and see that she remains not to court the palm of martyrdom from those unbelievers. Dom Michele,—for the chaplain had only gone for a moment into the church, and now again stood by his side,—'is the Blessed Sacrament placed in safety?—then take this weeping child to Sister Francesca, and see them escape to the hills.'"

"Nay, verily," returned the chaplain, "I leave you not, Monsignore. You may escape me, meantime, alone to the beach, and I at least, do not consider myself included in this summary command to fly."

"I will await your return," replied the Bishop gently, "the Turks have not yet entered the port, and there is yet time."

"Oh, my Father, my Father?" again exclaimed the weeping Angela, disengaging herself as Dom Michele attempted to lead her away, and throwing herself on her knees before him; "give me your blessing for the last, last time."

"God ever bless thee, my beloved child," he replied tenderly; "remember thy promise, and be steadfast."

She forgot in that last moment of utter agony

every thing but what he had been to her for so many years; and, seizing his hand, bathed it in tears, as she pressed it to her lips. "Oh, my father, my father! forget me not when you are in Heaven!" she whispered, in heart-broken accents.

"I will not, my dear child. Ah! weep not that thy poor Father is thought worthy of the martyr's crown. Be joyful, my daughter, we meet in Paradise."

At this moment Monsignore de Rigo came forth from the Palace; and Dom Michele, raising the weeping girl, led her away, now unresemblingly, though the good priest himself could not restrain his own tears.

"What has happened, Brother?" said the stranger Bishop, approaching; "the whole town seems in commotion."

"The Turks are approaching," replied Monsignore Carga, "and I have ordered a general flight into the caves and hiding-places of the island. They seek me, and will be satisfied with my blood."

"But you go not down to the beach, Brother?" replied the other, "else they shall have the heads of two Bishops, not one; for I leave you not."

A moment's thought crossed the martyr's face, he seemed listening for some unseen voice that was ever whispering beside him; and those who knew him always felt as if his answers in those moments were inspirations.

"The good Pastor giveth his life for his sheep," again he replied; "for you, Brother, fear not; they will not harm you. Two crowns only are to be gained to-morrow in yonder port."

Meantime Dom Michele hurried Angela down to Sister Francesca's. All was in confusion as they passed, though many had already departed. They found the door of the house wide open, and the old nun standing, as was most unusual for her in the door-way, her eyes fixed on the ground, and her dress in its fairest trim.

"How now, Sister Francesca?" said Dom Michele; "what do you want here, when every one else is either barricading their doors or flying to the hills?"

"To confess my faith," simply replied the old nun.

"Go, go," he replied, smiling, in spite of all the sorrows around him, the sobbing of children, the wailing of women, and the running to and fro of others in search of some loved one missing in the confusion; "this is not the time to confess your faith. I am the bearer of a message from the Bishop, that you take charge of this lamb of his, and hide it well from the attacks of yonder wolves. Good by, my child. Do not waste your tears in weeping for that saintly Bishop of ours; employ them in obtaining for poor Dom Michele the strength to be like him. We meet again in Paradise." And he was out of the door, and up the street before Angela had time to recollect herself.

But she was not one to waste her time in tears, when once something was to be done; and stepping into the terrace, she saw at a glance that the Turkish galley was now on the point of entering the harbor, and that it was full of armed men. A cannon-shot at this moment was fired, and a small body of Turks, stationed in the island, rapidly made their way down to the beach. She glanced round the landscape, and on the hill opposite to the left a small chapel struck her view. It was dedicated to our Immaculate Lady in her Presentation. Her mind at once grasped her whole line of conduct, and fearlessly she set to work to accomplish it.

"Mother," said she, "what refuge can we find better than under the wings of our Blessed Lady? and moreover from that spot we can see every thing that takes place in the port. Even if the Turks come near, there is a cave which we can retire to on the sea-shore behind, where it would be hard to find us."

So saying, scarcely waiting for the old nun's acquiescence, she busied herself in assembling some provisions, hastily laid them on her shoulder and took her way to the chapel, followed by Sister Francesca, who, in her simple faith, would have preferred the shelter of our Lady's Image to that of a fortress, had there been one within reach. She tried, however, in vain to keep up with the more youthful footsteps of her companion, as she began to climb the opposite hill.—Angela came to her support, and ere the Turkish galley came to anchor the rough door of the chapel had been opened, and they were both kneeling before the rustic altar. It was a rude building, erected by the piety of some devout soul in thanksgiving for a benefit obtained. A few stones on the earthen floor served for the purpose of seats; the rude altar was stripped of everything except a little worn and blackened Venetian statue of our Blessed Lady, and an earthenware vase which served the purpose of a lamp. The door faced the port, and Angela, leaving Sister Francesca on her knees before the